



KVARKENRÅDET
MERENKURKUN
NEUVOSTO

ANNUAL REPORT

KVARKEN COUNCIL EGTC



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ANNUAL REPORT

KVARKEN COUNCIL EGTC 2021



FOR A VIBRANT REGION

The Kvarken Council EGTC is a neutral collaboration platform and a facilitator of all kinds of cross-border cooperation in the Kvarken region.

The Kvarken Council is a Nordic cross-border cooperation platform for the counties of Ostrobothnia, Southern Ostrobothnia, and Central Ostrobothnia in Finland as well as Västerbotten County and Örnköldsvik Municipality in Sweden. Together they form the Kvarken Council's operating area, the Kvarken region. The Kvarken Council is one of the official cross-border cooperation bodies co-funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

THE KVARKEN COUNCIL EGTC STRIVES TO PROMOTE AND DEVELOP A STRONG AND VIABLE REGION BY:

- Promoting integration within the region.
- Providing a collaboration platform for all regional actors.
- Reducing and eliminating border obstacles.
- Increasing the region's visibility at national and European levels.
- Actively participating in several European networks.
- Utilizing the region's strengths and fostering its development, primarily in the following areas: business, education, tourism, research and development, health, culture, environment, sport, children and young people, and communications and transport infrastructure.

KVARKEN COUNCIL EGTC – ORGANIZATION

The Board of the Kvarken Council EGTC prepares the Council's meetings and functions as an operational management body. Among other things, the Board processes project plans and applications and appoints management groups and steering groups for various projects.

The Kvarken Council was founded in 1972 during the first Kvarken Conference in Vaasa, Finland. The first years were dedicated to the organization's formation and the cooperation's anchoring in the municipalities, authorities, and organizations. In 1979, the Kvarken Council became a part of the official Nordic border-regional cooperation, with financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers and its Nordic Senior Official's Committee for Regional Policy (NÄRP). The Kvarken Council's operations have been administered by a non-profit association as of 2008.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

At the turn of the year 2020–2021, the Kvarken Council changed from an association to a stable legal entity when the Kvarken Council EGTC began its operations. Consequently, the association's Board gathered for a final dissolution meeting in 2021.

The first Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Kvarken Council EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) brought the EGTC's members together on 28 May 2021. Due to COVID-19, the meeting was held as a video conference. The AGM discussed statutory matters.

During the Kvarken Council EGTC's first operating year of 2021, the Board has begun the process of drawing up a new strategy in broad partnership in order to meet new opportunities generated by the EGTC's establishment. The Board has also prepared work for preparatory groups and appointed a group for traffic and infrastructure issues, with Municipal Commissioner Hans Lindberg acting as its Chairman. In addition, it has engaged in dialogue with possible new members and granted Mo i Rana an observer status in the Kvarken Council EGTC's Board.



Photos: The Board visiting the City of Kurikka, Finland. The COVID-19 pandemic affected meeting agendas even in 2021, and the majority of Board meetings were held remotely. Happily, the Board had the chance to get together in Umeå, Sweden, in December; and in Kurikka, Finland, on 8 October. In addition to a Board meeting in Kurikka, participants had the opportunity to meet and learn more about the city, the EGTC's newest member.

The City of Kurikka was represented by Anna-Kaisa Pusa, Mayor and Deputy Chairman of the Kvarken Council, and Olavi Kandolin, Chairman of the City Board. Skiing legend and former Member of Parliament Juha Mieto also shared in the program.

BOARD 2021

In 2021, the Kvarken Council EGTC's Board consisted of nine members from both countries, Finland and Sweden. The Board held four meetings in 2021: a Teams meeting on 26 February, a Teams meeting on 28 May, a meeting in Kurikka on 8 October, and a meeting in Umeå on 15 December.

FINLAND

Ordinary Members

Joakim Strand, City of Vaasa, Chairman of the Board (*Tomas Häyry**)
Kaj Suomela, The Regional Council of Ostrobothnia
(*Mikaela Björklund**)

Asko Peltola, The Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia
(*Antti Saartenoja**)

Stina Mattila, City of Kokkola (*Jonne Sandberg**)

Hannemari Niemi, City of Seinäjoki (*Erkki Välimäki**)

Jyrki Kaiponen, The Regional Council of Central Ostrobothnia
(*Kajsa Kouvo**)

Anna-Kaisa Pusa, City of Kurikka, Deputy Chairman of the Board
(*Simo Kankaanpää**)

Rurik Ahlberg, Korsholm Municipality (*Samuel Broman**)

Peter Boström, City of Jakobstad (*Milla Kallioinen**)

SWEDEN

Ordinary Members

Lennart Holmlund, Region Västerbotten, Deputy Chairman of the Board (*Tomas Marklund**)

Lilly Bäcklund, Region Västerbotten (*Kristina Fredriksson**)

Mathias Sehlstedt, Region Västerbotten (*Mikael Jakobsson**)

Åsa Ågren Wikström, Region Västerbotten, Deputy Chairman of the Board (*Veronica Kerr**)

Mattias Larsson, Region Västerbotten (*Robin Thörnberg**)

Per Nylén, Örnköldsvik Municipality (*Anna-Britta Åkerlind**)

Hans Lindberg, Umeå Municipality (*Anders Ågren**)

Tomas Mörtzell, Storuman Municipality (*Karin Malmfjord**)

Christer Rönnlund, Lycksele Municipality (*Lars Olsson**)

* *Suppleants*

MEMBERS

As of 2021, the Kvarken Council's activities have been administered by a cooperation body called the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), which can be summarized as a cross-border legal instrument for collaboration.

The Kvarken Council EGTC was established by a constituent meeting on 2 October 2020. Its founding or constituent members granted membership to four new main members with voting rights and two other members without voting rights in connection to the EGTC's constituent meeting. Two other members without voting rights were granted membership in 2021.

Founding members of the Kvarken Council EGTC (with voting rights):

Region Västerbotten*

Umeå Municipality*

Örnköldsvik Municipality*

The Regional Council of Ostrobothnia*

The Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia*

The Regional Council of Central Ostrobothnia*

City of Vaasa*

City of Kokkola*

City of Seinäjoki*

City of Jakobstad*

City of Kurikka

Korsholm Municipality

Storuman Municipality

Lycksele Municipality

Other members of the Kvarken Council EGTC:

Vindeln Municipality

City of Nykarleby

City of Näripes

Nordmaling Municipality

* *Constituent members*

STAFF

The Kvarken Council is a small but highly operational and efficient organization. In 2021, Fredrik Furu was recruited as Event Coordinator for Kvarkenfest and Ida-Maria Huuhka as Communications Assistant. In addition, the recruitment of Veronica Berg as the Kvarken Council's Development Manager as of 1 January 2022 was prepared in 2021. The Development Manager's post is located in Umeå, Sweden.

Director Mathias Lindström
Financial Manager Maria Snickars
Communications Manager Johanna Häggman
Communications Assistant Ida-Maria Huuhka

Project Staff

Project Manager Marianne Sjöström
Project Leader Ann-Sofi Backgren
Event Coordinator Kvarkenfest Fredrik Furu
Senior Advisor Olav Jern
Senior Advisor Tomas Sikstöm

Office at Gerbyntie 18 in Vaasa.
Web site: kvarken.org

Accountants

Ordinary accountant Benita Öling, CGR and suppleant accountant Ernst&Young



CHAIRMAN'S GREETING

TOWARDS EVEN STRONGER COOPERATION



The pandemic maintained its iron grip over us and hampered cross-border cooperation even in 2021. Nonetheless, we have several reasons for joy to look back on as well as tools for the future.

Our long-awaited new ferry, Aurora Botnia, arrived, was inaugurated, and started operating in August 2021. The ferry is specially customized for our region. It's a great pleasure to present its onboard facilities, talk about its technology, and explain the significance of its construction for the whole Nordic industry – from planning to technology – in terms of employment and innovation. We can also proudly describe how our combined efforts brought about this result in order to secure collaboration in the Kvarken region and to strengthen the region's business sector and operating conditions. At the same time, this reinforces the whole North and gives everyone in the region an opportunity to launch and develop long-term cooperation, whether within tourism, health care, education, knowledge exchange, leisure time, or hobbies.

The ferry's commission and delivery were timely given investments in the region. Collaboration regarding the ferry is a concrete example of our region's will and ability to cooperate, while also being an eye-opener and a contributory cause for investments and big plans in the area. Even the major

investment in Skellefteå, Sweden, has come a long way with the production of the first battery cells already in 2021. This, too, gives hope for the future here in the North. Companies linked to the battery industry are already operational in the Finnish cities of Karleby and Jakobstad. Several letters of intent have also been signed in Vaasa, Finland, and with our Norwegian cooperation partners. The Nordic Battery Belt receives growing attention, referring to our latitudes and industrial cluster in the Kvarken region. Collaboration is important also in this respect because the industries that are formed establish a value chain that benefits from coordination and our strong sense of community.

Owing to major industrial investments, the time is right to prepare the region for electric aviation. In practice, the region already has electric machinery in the air; Skellefteå is a forerunner in this regard, soon to be followed by Seinäjoki in Finland. In addition, the region will most likely introduce new east-west flight routes by autumn 2022. These flights will be powered by biofuel, pending the arrival of larger electric aircraft on the market. The purpose is to help the region's companies, identify the needs of the region's inhabitants and business sector, and start reshaping travel patterns created by future aviation. In other words, the goal is to prepare the region for electric flights. The electric aviation project FAIR, run by the Kvarken Council and its cooperation partners, plays a significant role in this, aided by activities and interest from the Kvarken region's various businesses.

Mapping a fixed connection over the Kvarken Strait is now more topical than ever. Both freight and passenger transport needs will increase due to major industrial investments. Moreover, the Ukraine crisis

has illuminated the connection's geopolitical importance in a completely new light. Connections over the Kvarken are also vital in terms of Finland's security of supply.

Our region receives vitality through cooperation. If the pandemic was able to accelerate digital transformation, perhaps the Ukraine crisis will prompt the transition to energy self-sufficiency and sustainable fuels. The region is building a cluster with the capability to mine minerals and turn them into finished batteries – mostly self-reliantly. This means that it's important to maintain and develop our east-west connections across the region as well as the opportunities to reach the region's industries and ports e.g. on the Atlantic coast.

The times we live in are challenging, but they also hold great opportunities to transform the Kvarken region into the most attractive, vital, and safe region for people to live and work in.

Joakim Strand

Chairman of the Board, Kvarken Council EGTC

DIRECTOR'S GREETING

THE FUTURE IS HERE – AND IT'S OURS



The Kvarken Council's first operating year as an EGTC is now behind us. During this first year, we've been able to state numerous times how the restructuring truly was the right decision and its timing excellent. The deepening of Nordic cooperation is more important than ever, especially in these worrying times with a horrifying war nearby. We're facing a learning process in which the EGTC tool and its effects continue to seek their form, and we will endeavor to discover the most advantageous and smooth working methods that will benefit our member organizations and region in the best possible way.

Our new organizational form and the process up to its establishment have generated considerable interest both in the Nordic countries and Europe. The establishment process that resulted in our EGTC status on 31 December 2020 is already considered a best practice throughout the Nordic countries and Europe, but even the ongoing process will benefit organizations that decide to form an EGTC. We're paving the way and breaking new ground for Nordic cooperation.

Our EGTC status reinforces European interest-representation that takes place via the Kvarken Council seeing as we're now also an official partner in the EGTC Platform. We've also been invited and granted membership to the Scandria Alliance cooperation platform during our first operating year. In addition to this, the Kvarken Council is a member of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and the European Straits Initia-

tive (ESI). In other words, our preparedness for European interest-representation is high, and it has been further reinforced throughout the year.

In our first operating year as an EGTC, the number of members and interest in the membership have increased, which was also one of the objectives of the restructuring; to anchor Nordic cooperation more widely in the region at all levels. This effort, in combination with the looming end of the COVID-19 pandemic and the launch of the pride of Kvarken, the new Aurora Botnia ferry, have led to dramatically increased interest in Nordic cooperation in our region. At the same time, this sets out requirements on our organization, and we must meet the demands that have emerged in our region with guidance and support. Consequently, the hiring of new staff has proven timely, and the recruitment of a Development Manager on the Swedish side has filled a vacuum and a long-existing need. This is confirmed by the great reception of our new resource in the region, and we warmly welcome Veronica Berg to Kvarken cooperation.

Major business investments that are planned in the whole Kvarken region increase the need for cross-border cooperation. The Kvarken Council EGTC plays an important role in this because we can function as a platform for all measures that require cross-border coordination. The region's investments fall within a big push in Europe for a green transition. With proper coordination, we can make our home, the Kvarken region, a world leader in this regard. This also coincides with the new Interreg Aurora programme, which will begin in 2022. The programme allows the Kvarken Council EGTC and its members to collaborate over a larger region. In fact, this work has already begun because we're actively seeking new cooperation partners in Northern Sweden and Northern Finland. The new Aurora programme will become substantial, but we have a stable foundation and established cooperation within our EGTC. Therefore, we're an attractive cooperation partner even within this programme.

The work process to produce our new strategy began in 2021, and the strategy heavily emphasizes active participation. All members have shown great interest in the process, and some non-members have even been granted an observer status to follow the process and gain insights into it. The new strategy is due to be completed in 2022.

The Kvarken Council and formal cooperation across the Kvarken celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2022. The planning of Kvarkenfest – a major event with music, culture, and food from the region – was started well in advance in 2021. The festival stems from the Kvarken Council's desire to celebrate its 50th anniversary together with the region's inhabitants. The folk festival will be held on 18 June 2022 at Elisa Stadion in Vaasa, Finland. The region lacks a true folk festival that allows people to socialize and build up the contacts they lost during the pandemic and the Kvarken connection's rocky years. We have excellent conditions for cooperation with the new ferry connection and the region's major industrial investments, but contacts may be formed and strengthened only through encounters between people.

We have the potential to make our region the best in the world, whilst global events and the green transition give us an edge. The ferry is operational, east-west flight routes are coming, the EGTC instrument is in place, enormous industrial investments are underway, and we can offer safe and high-quality living environments close to nature and the sea as well as world-class education. All that remains is to bring this to the attention of those not living in the region – or even in the same country. We're well-placed to tell the rest of the world about this, forming a positive challenge in the coming years. The Kvarken region has the will, ambition, and necessary tools in place, which makes us unique. Let's get to work.

Forwards – together!

Mathias Lindström

Director, Kvarken Council EGTC

KVARKEN COUNCIL'S CORE ACTIVITIES – WHEN VISIONS BECOME REALITY

The Kvarken Council's core activity consists of promoting cross-border cooperation. This is achieved by e.g. assembling and launching various cooperation projects or collaboration structures, renting out simulta-

neous interpretation equipment, carrying out information dissemination activities, and practicing interest-representation. The Kvarken Council is one of the Nordic Council of Ministers' official Nordic cross-border coo-

peration bodies. Its operations are financed partly by the Nordic Council of Ministers and partly by membership fees.



STRATEGY

The strategic plan for 2018–2020, aiming at 2025, was adopted during the Kvarken Council association's 2018 AGM. It is based on a comprehensive interview round conducted with the association's members and other stakeholders.

The Kvarken Council EGTC started its operations at the turn of the year 2020–2021. The EGTC currently adheres to the association's Statutes, but the effort to

produce the Kvarken Council EGTC's new strategy and action plan began in early 2022.

The Board acts as the working committee for the strategy work, and the goal is to produce a well-anchored and well-constructed strategy and to present a draft framework of the strategy's content at the 2022 AGM. In parallel to this, an action plan for 2022 shall also be produced. The action plan shall primarily govern the Council's activities until the approval of the new strategy. In 2021, activities followed the Kvarken Council association:

According to Section 11 of the Statutes of the Kvarken Council, the association shall have a three-year strategic plan determined by an ordinary association meeting as well

as a one-year action plan determined by the Board. To the extent possible, the plans shall be harmonized with the respective regions' own development plans regarding their cross-border strategies. In addition, the plans must be in accordance with the Nordic Council of Ministers' overall objectives and priorities for cross-border cooperation. Eligible activities for cross-border cooperation determined by the EU shall also be taken into account in the plans. The current strategy consists of a thorough external analysis and three main themes:

- The Kvarken Region – An Active Region in European and Nordic Networks
- The Kvarken Region – Innovative Wellbeing
- The Kvarken Region – Cohesion Through Neighbourliness

KVARKEN COUNCIL EGTC

From an association to a stable legal entity. The Kvarken Council has taken the step to become the first fully Nordic EGTC area.

An EGTC can be described as a grouping within the EU, tasked with promoting cross-border cooperation. For the Kvarken Council, the EGTC brings about new opportunities to develop and strengthen the region with the help of cross-border cooperation projects.

An Interesting Collaboration Partner From All Points of View!

The Kvarken Council EGTC was registered in 2020 after approval from the Govern-

ment Offices of Sweden and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland. The founding meeting was held in October 2020, and the Kvarken Council EGTC began its operations at the turn of the year 2020–2021. The Kvarken Council EGTC is presumably Europe's largest EGTC from a geographical perspective and likely also due to its number of members. An interesting collaboration partner from all points of view!

Background and Process

On 20 May 2019, the Kvarken Council's AGM made the decision to establish the first fully Nordic EGTC area, the Kvarken Council EGTC. EGTC stands for European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, and it is the EU's own legal instrument for cross-border collaboration. An EGTC is a strong and distinct tool, specifically tailored for cross-border cooperation in Europe. There are currently circa 70 EGTC's in Europe, with several underway.

The Board of the Kvarken Council has acted as a preparatory group for the EGTC process. Work began in the autumn 2018 to adjust the Kvarken Council's Statutes to better suit the EGTC and its members, and the work was finished in 2021. During the EGTC's process work, the preparatory group analyzed the Kvarken Council's tasks, based on the members' needs and wishes, and examined various models (e.g. committees) for the EGTC's possible operating methods. The group also explored how the Kvarken region's municipalities could be involved in cross-border cooperation more efficiently, and opened up the possibility to accept Norwegian members in the future.

The Kvarken Council EGTC was registered in 2020 after approval from the Government Offices of Sweden and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland. The founding meeting was held on 2 October 2020, and the registered association was dissolved at the AGM preceding this meeting. The Kvarken Council EGTC started its operations at the turn of the year 2020–2021.

For the Kvarken Council and the region's members, the change to an EGTC produces stronger tools for creating more efficient and advantageous cooperation as well as developing and promoting the region's needs on a larger arena:

- A more powerful body that can push shared and regionally important issues at national and EU levels.
- Identification – Facilitates actions at EU level.
- Visibility! First Nordic cross-border committee to make the change.
- Firmer structure – From an association to a stable legal entity – Stronger commitment from partners.
- Membership in the EGTC Platform strengthens the opportunities for interest-representation in Europe.
- Facilitates the realization and management of cross-border development projects.

As an EGTC, the Kvarken Council carries more weight to coordinate development in the region and to jointly advance issues of regional importance at national, Nordic, and EU levels. The establishment of the EGTC has improved the visibility and impact of the Kvarken region's important cross-border cooperation. As of 2021, the Kvarken Council EGTC has been included in the so-called EGTC Platform, an organization that represents the interests of cross-border regions at EU level.

BORDER OBSTACLE WORK IN EUROPEAN NETWORKS

The Kvarken Council is working actively in a number of European networks to promote a more open Europe and to reduce border barriers.

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN BORDER REGIONS AEBR

The Kvarken Council acquires a European perspective for its border obstacle work by participating e.g. in the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), which is an interest organization for European border regions. AEBR practices e.g. interest representation, exchange of experiences, and dissemination of information. The Kvarken

Council shares membership in the AEBR with MittSkandia.

EUROPEAN STRAITS INITIATIVE ESI

The Kvarken Council is a member of the European Straits Initiative ESI network, which is a partnership consisting of European regions bordered by a strait. The network's goal is to promote the visibility of European straits and their specificities and represent their interests at EU level. The ESI partnership also aims to develop the launch of various cooperation projects and promote cooperation between the straits in terms of economic development, environmental protection, traffic and logistics, cultural collaboration, and tourism.

THE EGTC PLATFORM

The EGTC Platform was established on 27th January 2011 by the European Committee of the Regions. The Kvarken Council EGTC will be included in the EGTC Platform upon its establishment, which strengthens the Council's opportunities to practice interest representation in Europe. The EGTC Platform is an organization that represents the interests of cross-border regions at EU level and simultaneously functions as a platform for the exchange of experiences.

In addition to promoting the EGTC as a tool for territorial cohesion and giving visibility to EGTC projects, it also supports the European Committee of the Regions and fulfills a consultative purpose regarding cross-border issues.

SCANDRIA®ALLIANCE

Scandria Corridor is a geographic corridor which extends from the north of Scandinavia via Oslo, Helsinki, Stockholm, Berlin, and Wien to the northern part of the Adriatic Sea in Italy.

Scandria Alliance is a cooperative platform for e.g. cities and regions along the corridor to cooperate on climate-smart multimodal transport solutions to achieve sustainable regional development. The Kvarken Council EGTC was granted a membership in the alliance in 2021.

The membership in Scandria Alliance results in better opportunities to interest monitor the needs and interests of the region on EU-level, and offers also a natural partnership platform for new projects, for example within CEF or the Interreg Baltic Sea Region. The vice-chairman Åsa Ågren-Wikström is the board's representative in the steering group for Scandria Alliance.



KVARKEN TRAFFIC

The maiden voyage of Aurora Botnia in the autumn 2021 marked the culmination of more than a decade of intensive work. It was also a major milestone and a concrete result of a greatly successful and long-term feat of strength.

Traffic over the Kvarken is one of the Kvarken Council's core issues. Throughout its existence and activities, the organization has endeavored to secure and develop connections within the Kvarken region.

The strait between Vaasa, Finland, and Umeå, Sweden, unites much more than just two neighbouring cities; the ferry connection across Kvarken is an important part of a transport route that stretches from Norway's northernmost port cities in the west to Russia and the Baltic countries in the east. Maintaining and improving this route is important for companies operating along it and for the people living in the region. In addition to business activities, a viable connection across the Kvarken also benefits cross-border cooperation within culture, education, health care, and administration.

ARRIVAL OF AURORA BOTNIA TO THE KVARKEN REGION

The new M/S Aurora Botnia vessel, operating between Vaasa and Umeå, was christened on Wednesday 25 August 2021. The ferry's maiden voyage took place on 28 August. Aurora Botnia is an important element in the region's increasingly stronger infrastructure and growing Nordic cooperation.

BRAVE DECISION-MAKING AND LONG-TERM THINKING



The new M/S Aurora Botnia vessel, operating between Umeå and Vaasa, was christened on 25 August 2021. The ferry's maiden voyage took place on 28 August. Aurora Botnia is an important element in the region's increasingly stronger infrastructure and growing Nordic cooperation. Photo: Christoffer Björklund / Wasaline

Relieved voices could be heard among the laughter and applause at the ferry's christening. The new ferry has demanded a great deal of effort and determined and hard work at various levels, e.g. by several projects over many years before the realization of the ferry and by Kvarken Link, a company jointly owned by Umeå Kommunföretag AB and the City of Vaasa. This work has yielded results; the ferry is now here and has ushered in a new era.

Hans Lindberg (S), Municipal Commissioner of Umeå Municipality and Board member of both Kvarken Link and Kvarken Council EGTC, was overjoyed to see the process come so far. –It's been a long journey, and it is victory in itself to be able to stand here today. Reaching this point was certainly never taken for granted because we had difficulty in finding actors who wanted to operate ferry traffic between Finland and Sweden.

–This prompted Umeå and Vaasa to jointly establish the company Kvarken Link and to begin raising extensive project financing for a new ferry. Politically speaking, it hasn't been an easy road, and it has required brave decision-making and long-term thinking, Lindberg explains.

The ferry is characterized by reduced emis-

sions and sustainable future development. It also promotes freight traffic in a better and more environmentally friendly way and simultaneously ties the regions and the countries of Finland, Sweden, and Norway even more closely together.

– This is absolutely crucial for business development, and it allows us to look to the future in an altogether new way. It also facilitates freight traffic and enables transports that strengthen the development of the east-west route, Lindberg adds.

NORDIC COOPERATION LEADS TO RESULTS

When Tomas Häyry, Mayor of the City of Vaasa and Chairman of Kvarken Link, together with his wife Marja-Riitta Häyry had the honour of christening Aurora Botnia, Häyry strongly emphasized the vision shared by Vaasa and Umeå; to invest in a sustainable infrastructure and to create cross-border cooperation at different levels:

– The solutions that Aurora Botnia stands for environmentally are the result of excellent cooperation between various actors. The ferry

also provides a continuous platform for future research.

Joakim Strand (SFP), Member of Parliament and Chairman of Vaasa City Council and Kvarken Council EGTC, praises the drive and ambition that have permeated the whole process:

– The world needs more Nordic cooperation and an ambitious attitude to technology to fight climate change.

Rickard Carstedt from Region Västerbotten also recognizes the enormous importance of improved and renewed ferry traffic for Västerbotten:

– This is a fantastic day for the region! We're witnessing the birth of many new opportunities. Above all, we see a new labour market emerging between the countries, and we're able to educate and move between the countries in completely new ways. I also see opportunities in battery material investments, in which we as a region take our place in the Nordic battery belt.

NEW ERA OF NORDIC COOPERATION

Aurora Botnia's christening was not only a celebration of the new ferry; the fanfare at the

port also praised the strong and growing Nordic cooperation in which Aurora Botnia forms an important element in an even stronger infrastructure and a more close-knit region. Consequently, the ferry's maiden voyage on Saturday 28 August can be seen as ushering in a new era of Nordic cooperation.

MAIDEN VOYAGE AND FIRST ARRIVAL TO UMEÅ

On Saturday morning 28 August 2021, Aurora Botnia raised anchor in Vaasa, Finland, and soon approached the port in Holmsund, Sweden, for the first time. The day couldn't have been more perfect when the world's currently most environmentally friendly ferry was welcomed; a clear blue sky, a warm breeze, pleasure craft on the water, and many expectant travellers.

The arrival of Aurora Botnia was a historic event and a milestone for both Vaasa and Umeå – a concrete result of thousands of hours of hard work. Aurora Botnia also helps us form stronger interpersonal bonds between our countries.

– This is the beginning of something new. The ferry creates conditions for even deeper collaboration, aiming at a common labour market between

our countries. It's important for all investments that currently take place in the region and also for creating closer cooperation within research, education, and health care, explains Joakim Strand (SFP), Member of Parliament and Chairman of Vaasa City Council and Kvarken Council EGTC, in connection to the ferry's maiden arrival to the port of Umeå.

M/S AURORA BOTNIA

M/S Aurora Botnia is a custom-made vessel for the route Umeå–Vaasa. It is equipped with cutting-edge environmental technology and runs on electricity and renewable fuels. The ferry's interior design in its public spaces and cabins is based on recycled materials. For instance, table-tops and counters are manufactured from recycled plastics, and cabin carpets are largely made of fibers from old fishing nets. M/S Aurora Botnia is not just a business affair for Vaasa and Umeå; the vessel links the ports together and ties them to the Norwegian Atlantic coast, with routes to the Baltic countries, Russia, India, and Japan. Therefore, it is of importance for the whole Kvarken region and the Nordic countries.

Revised text originally published by Umeå Municipality.



It finally happened in 2021. The new M/S Aurora Botnia vessel, operating between Umeå and Vaasa, was christened on 25 August and completed its maiden voyage on 28 August. Aurora Botnia is an important element in the region's increasingly stronger infrastructure and growing Nordic cooperation.

ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE BORDER OBSTACLES

The Nordic Council of Ministers defines a border obstacle as “any type of problem that prevents, restricts, or renders more difficult the potential of people to operate freely across national borders”. In accordance with the Nordic Council of Ministers’ priorities, cross-border regions shall actively strive to reduce border obstacles.

The Kvarken Council is one of the official cross-border cooperation bodies, i.e. a cross-border committee, co-funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Kvarken Council takes border obstacle work into account in all its operations, including mapping, dissemination of information, and interest-representation so as to reduce border obstacles and/or their effects in the Kvarken region. In addition, the organization actively participates in meetings arranged by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

REGIONAL POLICY THEMATIC GROUPS

The Kvarken Council cross-border committee is included in the Nordic Council of Ministers’ thematic group “Green and Inclusive Urban Development” and participates in the thematic group’s implementation.

KVARKEN COUNCIL’S ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO THE NORDIC VISION 2030:

Throughout the years, the Kvarken Council has actively participated in the work to carry out the Nordic Vision for Nordic cooperation. The organization has implemented the following measures in relation to the Nordic Vision:

OBJECTIVE 1

Strengthen research and development and the promotion of solutions that support carbon neutrality and climate adaptation, including in relation to transport, construction, food, and energy.

In this area, the Kvarken Council together with regional actors and actors from Nordland County have begun to analyze the regional effects arising from an early implementation of electric aviation in the region, its impact on regional and cross-border development and cooperation, how it would accelerate the transition to environmentally friendly aviation, and how this, in turn, would improve cross-border and Nordic

cooperation in the region. This work will be carried out in collaboration with the region’s airports, business sector, the cities of Vaasa and Umeå, and Nord University.

Early implementation of electric aviation in the Kvarken region and the Nordic countries has the potential to efficiently address some of the region’s major challenges, such as demographic change and urbanization, which affect the availability of well-functioning public services and supply of skills. The region’s long distances and lack of east-west communications hinder cross-border cooperation, whilst the global need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impacts is a highly topical issue. Therefore, there is a general demand among public and private actors for efficient and sustainable communications that bridge the aforementioned challenges. In particular, the aviation industry and local regional airports face major challenges in terms of economic conditions and the need to reduce their climate and environmental impact.

OBJECTIVE 6

Support knowledge and innovation and make it easier for companies throughout the Nordic region to take full advantage of the development opportunities created by the green, technological, and digital transformation and the growing bioeconomy.

In order to create additional value regarding the potential of electric aviation, the Kvarken Council and regional actors have

planned to carry out an investigation into innovative processes with the purpose of strengthening the demand and development of innovation in the public and private sectors. The processes are based on knowledge produced by them, the identification of measures, and competence. The innovative effort aims to result in the processing of measures/concepts that strengthen the identified nodes, e.g. airports, applications for active cooperation within various sectors of society, e.g. health care, education, tourism industry, as well as business concepts and services for the implementation of electric aviation.

The Kvarken Council and regional actors have jointly endeavored to create a competence network around electric aviation that can be used for knowledge acquisition, quality control, contact networks, and information dissemination. As new needs for skills are identified, relevant actors will be invited to join competence networks. This is accompanied with an innovation process for social development, with the aim to improve services, design solutions, and business plans that support and bring added value to the commercialization of electric aviation in the region. The results, such as market analyses, route network analyses, knowledge of electric aviation’s social impacts, and measures that are pointed out in implementation guidelines constitute important basic conditions, which allow the innovation process to generate results in line with the region’s needs regarding different areas (eg. health care, education, tourism industry, business cooperation).

OBJECTIVE 7

Develop skills and well-functioning labour markets that match the requirements of the green transition and digital developments, and that support freedom of movement in the Nordic region.

COVID-19 has had extremely negative consequences for cross-border cooperation, especially because national authorities have approached the functioning of cross-border regions with a severe lack of understanding. The Kvarken region is home to a large cross-border labour market, both in terms of the public sector and the considerable amount of companies engaged in cross-border activities. The new Aurora Botnia ferry facilitates the cross-border labour market. In the course of the year, the Kvarken Council EGTC has striven to foster mobility, the mutual recognition and standardization of professional and educational qualifications, and lifelong learning for future skills. Various educational institutions and higher education institutions have been involved in this work.

Art and culture collaboration, a focus area in the Nordic Council of Ministers' action plan under Objective 6, is also a priority area in the Kvarken Council EGTC's work, which is concretized through the Kvarken region's strong, cross-border cultural networks.

OBJECTIVE 10

Work to involve everyone living in the Nordic region in the green transition and digital developments, utilize the potential of this transition, and counteract the widening gaps in society as a result of this transition.

Cross-border cooperation in the Kvarken region is essentially people-to-people cooperation, which is reinforced by the fact that the Kvarken Council EGTC is formed by public law organizations, such as Region Västerbotten, the Regional Councils of Ostrobothnia, South Ostrobothnia, and Central Ostrobothnia, and the region's largest cities and municipalities, which all bear a statutory liability for development. The green transition is a recurring theme for

all the aforementioned parties' duties and work.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has hindered cross-border cooperation over a long period, which is why border regions and cross-border cooperation must be given a stronger role in Nordic cooperation in the future.

OBJECTIVE 11

Give Nordic civil society, and especially children and young people, a louder voice and greater participation in Nordic cooperation, as well as increase their knowledge of the languages and cultures of neighbouring countries.

In its strategy work, the Kvarken Council EGTC will create conditions for a strong, cross-border civil society network with a clear focus on contributing to linguistic and cultural understanding. The Kvarken Council EGTC continuously operates in Finnish and Swedish, and the EGTC has mobile interpretation equipment that can be used to facilitate language comprehension in contexts where interpretation may foster contacts and interaction.

OBJECTIVE 12

Maintain trust and cohesion in the Nordic region, its shared values, and the Nordic community with an emphasis on culture, democracy, equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, and freedom of expression.

The establishment of the Kvarken Council EGTC has marked a major step in the Kvarken region to maintain trust and cohesion across borders in this part of the North. With the grouping agreement, the members commit to cooperation that is truly built on shared values and the Nordic community, with a focus on culture, democracy, equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, and freedom of expression.

OTHER:

In addition to these aforementioned measures, the Nordic Vision 2030 is also taken into account in all other activities and projects involving the Kvarken Council. If the Nordic region truly aims to become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030, border regions must implement active measures. These regions possess the will, ambition, and expertise to contribute to the attainment of this goal. Therefore, both the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers should endeavor to strengthen the border regions' activities and financing. Cooperation takes place "for real" in these border regions, and the activities are highly cost-efficient because border committees utilize a mix of Nordic, regional, municipal, and EU financing – occasionally even private funding. Visions without practical measures often remain unfulfilled, but if we back up a vision with effective actions and financing, it becomes an attainable goal.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND VISIBILITY

In addition to information dissemination in connection with a great many meetings and seminars that were mainly held digitally in 2021, the core of the Kvarken Council's information activities consists of the webpage kvarken.org, information materials, articles, news, and press releases that are published e.g. via the webpage. Information is shared through newsletters and the Kvarken Council's Facebook page and LinkedIn, sometimes even via email. Additionally, the organization's projects produce various types of materials. All these materials showcase the Kvarken Council's role in the context.

In 2021, the Kvarken Council worked with new materials and new tools that were taken into use before the turn of the year 2020–2021; a new graphic appearance, new webpage, and new newsletter.

The Kvarken Council published two newsletters and several info letters from the Destination Kvarken project during 2021. These newsletters have contained comprehensive materials about the organization's activities, organizational change, projects, and project results. Moreover, several invitations have been sent by projects.


By the end of 2021, the newsletter had 900 subscribers and the Facebook page 1,465 followers. The Kvarken Council has also gained visibility in several media outlets on both sides of the Kvarken concerning e.g. its organizational change and the electric

aviation project FAIR and, above all, in connection to discussions about the fixed link over the Kvarken as well as the Battery Belt and its new industrial establishments connected to battery production.

In 2021, the webpage kvarken.org was visited by 15,809 users, which is an increase of 19% compared to the year 2020. On average, visits lasted 2 minutes 22 seconds, which is 3 seconds more compared to the previous year. Page views increased by almost 39% with 61,920 views. On average, users visited 2,75 pages per session.

MOST VISITED SITES AMONG USERS

The home page kvarken.org had 10,097 page views. Also the project page for FAIR and pages containing information about Europe's bridges and tunnels, working with us, general information about the organization, projects, news, contact information, and Aurora Botnia's page gained up to 3,008 visitors per page.



IN 2021, THE WEBPAGE KVARKEN.ORG WAS VISITED BY 15,809 USERS, AN INCREASE OF 19% COMPARED TO 2020.

THERE WERE 61,920 PAGE VIEWS, AN INCREASE OF ALMOST 39%. ON AVERAGE, USERS VISITED 2,75 PAGES PER SESSION.



▲ Tom Einar Jensen, CEO of Norwegian FREYR Battery, attended Wasa Future Festival via a video link from Oslo. He explained the strategies behind the new, planned factories and stated that “the green shift is on the rise”. According to Jensen, the battery belt will become a global centre for circular economy.

EVENTS

COVID-19 has affected the prospects to arrange large events even in 2021. Cooperation efforts and opportunities to establish and develop the already existing contacts have been made more difficult due to the pandemic and its connected guidelines and restrictions. Nevertheless, the Kvarken Council has managed to organize a hybrid event and live discussion forum, Wasa Future Festival. In addition, the Council's projects have arranged several digital workshop, briefings, and trainings.

Wasa Future Festival was organized as a hybrid event, meaning that the participants had the chance to participate in the event on-site or remotely via a live stream. Moreover, they could also view the event afterwards thanks to a recording.

Wasa Future Festival was arranged by the Kvarken Council's electric aviation project FAIR and the projects Nordic Battery Belt Logistics and Fixed Link only two days after it was announced that the Norwegian FREYR

Battery, which is building five battery cell facilities in Mo i Rana, would also establish itself in Vaasa, Finland. The event stirred a great deal of interest as Einar Jensen, CEO of FREYR Battery, participated in it via a video call from Oslo.

During the event, the electric aviation project FAIR also presented the results it had produced thus far; what is required to become an early implementer of technology, the conditions we have in the Kvarken region, and how politics can accelerate the green transition concerning electric aviation. The region's newest cooperation projects, Nordic Battery Belt Logistics and Fixed Link, were also showcased at the event. There were also discussions about the development of industry and society, cooperation, needs, and tools on account of battery plant establishments across the whole Kvarken region. Even talks concerning a fixed bridge across the Kvarken continued, with participants discussing its realities, potential, and outlook.

▲ Riitta Björkenheim, Tomas Häyry and Richard Carstedt welcome the Norwegian FREYR Battery's Letter of Intent with the City of Vaasa. The Nordic Battery Belt is becoming reality, and now the region needs both courage and cooperation to attract the necessary labour force – and to prevent its own brain drain. Photo: Anna Sand / bySand



▲ Lars Westin from Umeå University and Helka Kalliomäki and Antti Mäenpää from the University of Vaasa have been involved in FAIR's first work package and were called to outline their conclusions at Wasa Future Festival. Photo: Anna Sand / bySand



KVARKEN COUNCIL'S PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The Kvarken Council leads its own projects as well as initiates cooperation projects between different parties.

BOTNIA-ATLANTICA 2014–2020

The INTERREG Botnia-Atlantica programme for 2014–2020 came into effect in 2015. The programme has four priorities: Innovation, Business, Environment, and Transport. The programme area covers three Ostrobothnian counties in Finland, the counties of Västerbotten and Västernorrland as well as the municipality of Nordanstig in Sweden, and the county of Nordland in Norway.



▲ Summer nights at the River Umeälven.
Photo: Lola Akinmade Akerstom / Kvarken Destinations Contentbank

DESTINATION KVARKEN

Improved visibility and more visitors to the Kvarken region through cross-border cooperation.

The Destination Kvarken project (marketing name Kvarken Destinations) will help exportable small and medium enterprises with focus on hospitality industry to reach out to new and bigger markets for more growth and competitiveness. The project's main target is to increase the amount of domestic and foreign tour operators who include our area in their supply, by developing a concept for shared and intensified marketing activities. Further, we plan to arouse

KVARKEN COUNCIL'S PROJECTS

The Kvarken Council has carried out four own projects in 2021. These include the Destination Kvarken tourism development project, the electric aviation innovation project FAIR, the Nordic Battery Belt Logistics transport project, and Fixed Link over the Kvarken. In addition to these, the Kvarken Council has co-financed and actively participated in two other projects, BSR Access and StoryTagging, both owned by other parties.



media interest in our destination, resulting in increasing visibility both towards the desired tour operators and also towards the end-customers in our priority markets. Sustainability and equality are important values in the project.

The project shall promote growth, not just through internationalisation but also through a conscious focus on digitalisation, research and development, and the opportunities this offers for improving the competitiveness of the tourism industry in this region. Hanken School of Economics will provide this competence in the project.

The webpage about our destination focused on hospitality industry – Take a tour – learn more about Kvarken Destinations and find around 130 images, videos, teasers and 20 theme articles, in English and German, about Kvarken Destinations in the content bank on the same page. Take a look: <https://kvarkendestinations.com>

Budget: 1 675 000 euro

Project timetable: 1.8.2018 – 31.7.2021, prolonged to 31.12.2021 because of the pandemic

Partnership: Kvarken Council (Lead Part) | Vaasa Region Development Company VASEK | Hanken School of Economics | Umeå Municipality | Visit Umeå AB | Höga Kusten Destinationsutveckling AB



▲ Skuleskogen National Park.

Photo: Lola Akinmade Akerstrom / Kvarken Destinations Contentbank

Main financier: Interreg Botnia-Atlantica

Co-financiers: Kvarken Council (FI) | Vaasa Region Development Company VASEK (FI) | Hanken School of Economics (FI) | Umeå Municipality (SE) | Höga Kusten Destinationsutveckling AB (SE) | Regional Council of Ostrobothnia (FI) | Region Västerbotten (SE) | Region Västernorrland (SE) | Provincial Government Västernorrland (SE) | City of Vaasa/Visit Vasa (FI) | Visit Lakeus Ltd (FI) | Kokkola Tourism Ltd (FI) | Jakobstad Region Development Company Concordia Ltd (FI) | Visit Kristinestad Ltd (FI) | NLC Ferry Ltd (FI)

For further information: kvarkendestinations.com

The Kvarken Councils/ Nordic Council of Ministers financing share is 40 000 euro.



EUROPEAN UNION



European Regional Development Fund

FAIR

FAIR is a two-year project to support the early and efficient commercialization of electric regional flights in the Kvarken region.

FAIR (Finding innovations to Accelerate the Implementation of electric Regional aviation) is a first step of preparing the Kvarken region for an early implementation of electric aviation.

The project increases the knowledge base, investigates the possibilities and surveys both the needs and the required technical investments.

The project has a broad partnership of actors and is coordinated by the Kvarken council as project owner. It builds on a history of extensive cross-border collaboration in the region in different projects. This project is in line with the Traffic strategy for the E12-region with goals for carbon neutral transport as well as measures aimed at investigating east-west regional flight routes.

The technical progress of electric aviation is rapidly advancing. Within the coming five-year period several models of regional electric aircraft will be on the market. Since electric aircraft does

not produce any operational greenhouse gas emissions, it is set to be one of the most climate-efficient modes of transport in the future. At the same time, electric operation means drastically reduced fuel and maintenance costs, which creates very competitive operating costs and thus potential for a completely new regional air system.

Early implementation of electric aviation in the Kvarken region has the potential to effectively address some of the region's major challenges such as demographic change and urbanization, long distances and the lack of east-west communications, and the global need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impact. The geography of FAIR includes also Nordland County in Norway.

FAIR is divided into four objectives

1. Proposing where to implement electric-powered regional flights in the Kvarken region and increase knowledge of the regional effects
2. Invent the need of measures at nodes and examine financing options
3. Develop innovative concepts and business models supporting an early implementation of electric-powered regional aircraft
4. Raise awareness / knowledge of regional electric aviation in the region to promote demand and accelerate application

Budget: 1 338 000 euro, increased because of the extended partnership

Project timetable: 1.5.2020 – 30.6.2022, prolonged because of the extended partnership and extended project area to 31.10.2022

Partnership: Kvarken Council (Lead part) | BioFuel Region BFR AB | Region Västerbotten | RISE Research Institutes of Sweden | Umeå University | University of Vaasa | MidtSkandia | Nord University

Main financier: Interreg Botnia-Atlantica

Financiers: Region Västerbotten | Regional Council of Ostrobothnia | Kvarken Council (Lead part) | BioFuel Region BFR AB | City of Vaasa | FAB Kronoby Flyghangar | Into Seinäjoki Oy | Lycksele Airport AB | Ostrobothnia Chamber of Commerce | RISE Research Institutes of Sweden | Skellefteå City Airport AB | Skellefteå Kraft AB | South Ostrobothnia Chamber of Commerce | Storumans Kommunföretag AB | Swedavia Umeå Airport | Umeå Municipality | Umeå University | University of Vaasa | Vaasan Sähkö Oy | Vaasa Region Development Company, VASEK | Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce | Örnsköldsvik Airport AB | Nord University | MidtSkandia | Nordland County Municipality | Brønnøy Municipality | Alstahaug Municipality | Helgeland Regional Council | Indre Helgeland Regional Council | Rana Utvikling

Supporting Partners: Air Traffic Network | BSR ACCESS | ELISE | Finavia | Funktionshinderrådet Umeå | Future Cleantech Solutions | Green Flyway | Grön Flygplats | Heart Aerospace | Helsinki Electric Aviation Association ry | Jonair | Luftfartsverket | NEA – Nordic Network for Electric Aviation | Umeå kommunföretag AB | Umeå Institute of Design | The Swedish 2030-secretariat | Transportföretagen | Avinor

For further information: flyfairkvarken.com

The Kvarken Councils/ Nordic Council of Ministers financing share is 32 500 euro.



▲ Electric aviation already a reality in the Kvarken region!

In November 2021 FAIR visited Skellefteå Airport and Green Flight Academy for a combined study visit and results presentation.

With 1MW charging capacity installed, Pipistrel electric airplanes on-site and the world's most sustainable flight academy, Skellefteå is a pioneer in the field of electric aviation.



NORDIC BATTERY BELT LOGISTICS

The Nordic Battery Belt Logistics project will look at logistics flows regarding planned battery plants in the Kvarken region.

Nordic Battery Belt Logistics will produce a strategy that aims to contribute to sustainable and cost-effective transports in the region from a cross-border perspective. The purpose is to provide a better understanding of new logistics flows that are expected to emerge in the region due to ongoing and planned battery plant establishments. In other words, the project encompasses both an inventory and a strategy for how the region's logistics supply and infrastructure should be developed in order to support the Nordic

Battery Belt cluster's development.

Partnership: Kvarken Council EGTC (lead part), the Vaasa Region Development Company VASEK, Skellefteå Municipality, and the Kokkola Region Development Company KOSEK, Rana utvikling

Main financier: Interreg Botnia-Atlantica

Co-financiers: Kvarken Council EGTC (lead part), the Vaasa Region Development Company VASEK, Skellefteå Municipality, and the Kokkola Region Development Company KOSEK,

Project timetable: 1.5.2021–31.10.2022

Total budget: 300 000 euro

The Kvarken Councils/ Nordic Council of Ministers financing share is 7 000 euro.



Interreg
Botnia-Atlantica
European Regional Development Fund

FIXED LINK

Potential for a bridge over the Kvarken - A comprehensive impact assessment and an analysis of business proposals.

The project aims to create decision guidance documents that can serve as the basis for a long-term, cross-border (east-west) strategy/position for how the question of the fixed link will be promoted in the future.

The project consists of two parts:

- A comprehensive impact assessment. The impact assessment will encompass a quality assurance of the project's socio-economic consequences as well as a general environmental assessment of the suggested alternative routes.
- Analysis of business proposals. Business proposals are complicated by nature, which is why expert knowledge and further investigation are necessary to analyze their content and assess their feasibility.

Partnership: Kvarken Council EGTC (lead part) and the Blå Vägen association in Sweden

Main financier: Interreg Botnia-Atlantica

Supporting partnership: Meridiam, Etgar AI Engineering, and Green Carbon Recovery

Project timetable: 1.5.2021 – 31.10.2022

Total budget: 215 000 euro

The Kvarken Councils/ Nordic Council of Ministers financing share is 14 875 euro.

PROJECTS CO-FUNDED BY THE KVARKEN COUNCIL AND OWNED BY OTHER PARTIES



Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme
2014–2020



EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in your future
European Regional Development Fund

STORYTAGGING

The StoryTagging project strives to highlight natural and cultural heritage by gathering and documenting various stories and bringing them to life – perhaps also with new products.

The project partners will gather stories and transfer them to a digital platform, both in text and audio form. The digital platform will contain stories and a knowledge bank on digital marketing and markets. In addition, the project will provide economic support for a small number of creative actors who wish to create a new product or artwork connected to the stories.

The project's target group are small and medium enterprises, organizations receiving business support, and others. The project focu-

ses on entrepreneurship, with the goal of expanding the entrepreneurs' market reach. The aim is for the digital platform to continue as a non-profit business model after the completion of the project and be available to actors within the NPA programme's geographical area. The digital platform is called Northword.

StoryTagging has three key objectives:

- Gather and organize stories that celebrate northern cultural heritage.
- Help the creative industry to bring stories to life with products and artworks.
- Create a digital platform to expand the market reach of creative actors in the North.

Partnership: Robert Gordon University (lead part) | University of the Highlands and Islands | Kenozero National Park | Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust | Ulster University | Region Västerbotten | Kvarken Council

Main financier: Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme NPA

Project timetable: 1.5.2020–31.12.2022

Budget: 999 757.47 euro

For further information: storytagging.interreg-npa.eu/

The Kvarken Councils/ Nordic Council of Ministers financing share is 30 000 euro.

BSR ACCESS

The project promotes access to clean, efficient, and sustainable modes of transport in the Baltic Sea region.

The Kvarken Council is one of the partners in the BSR Access project, which aims at fostering access to clean, efficient, and multimodal transport corridors in the Baltic Sea region. It also strives to contribute to the region's sustainable growth. The project fosters the active transnational planning of the TEN-T core network corridor, with clean fuel solutions and connections to the transport network.

The Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council functions as the project's lead part, joined by six other organizations in the Baltic Sea region.

They share with each other e.g. the knowledge and experiences acquired through various projects (these projects in parentheses): The Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council (lead part in BSR Access, NSB CoRe), Region Blekinge in Sweden (TENTacle), the Kvarken Council (E12 Atlantica Transport, Midway Alignment of the Bothnian Corridor and MABA II), Port of Hamburg Marketing (EMMA), Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg (Scandria2Act), and the Capital Region of Denmark (STRING Network).

The Kvarken Council answers for the activity that focuses on various cross-border cooperation forms regarding transport corridors. A webinar and a preliminary survey and mapping will be compiled into a statement, which will present functional and recommended cooperation models with a focus on cross-border collaboration between the countries.

Project timetable: 1.10.2018 – 30.9.2021 prolonged to 30.6.2022. because of the pandemic

Budget: 1 million euro

Main financier: Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme

Partnership: Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council (lead partner), Region Blekinge Sweden, Kvarken Council, Port of Hamburg Marketing, Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg, and Capital Region of Denmark

For further information: uudenmaanliitto.fi/bsraccess

The Nordic Council of Ministers' financial contribution is 37 875 EUR.

INCOME STATEMENT 01.01.2020 – 31.12.2020	2021	2020
Ordinary Operations		
Income		
Operating income	19 650,00	13 800,00
Project income	973 187,54	1 016 345,51
Other project income	94 500,00	10 562,73
Other income	940,65	4 623,03
Income in total	1 088 278,19	1 045 331,27
Expenses		
Personnel expenses	-375 348,42	-328 825,13
Depreciation	-1 273,52	-1 698,02
Other expenses		
Expenses for equipment	-8 517,03	-10 555,66
Other personnel expenses	-30 600,06	-16 526,33
Reimbursement of expenses	-120,00	
Rent	-65 234,70	-51 839,68
Operating premises	-7 002,43	-5 845,55
Marketing/ information	-29 893,96	-11 767,94
Representation	-4 630,87	-3 054,69
Travel expenses	-36 936,83	-16 148,08
Office and administrative costs	-28 856,35	-18 210,05
Outsourced services	-446 667,48	-285 997,76
Insurances	-2 504,15	-1 809,30
Service fees	-820,31	-917,19
Other operative costs	-250 026,11	-260 245,46
Other expenses in total	-911 810,28	-682 917,69
Expenses in total	-1 288 432,22	-1 013 440,84
Surplus/ deficit	-200 154,03	31 890,43
Acquisition of funds		
Income		
Membership fees	298 600,00	181 800,00
Income in total	298 600,00	181 800,00
Acquisition of funds in total	298 600,00	181 800,00
Surplus/ deficit	98 445,97	213 690,43
Investment and financial activities		
Income		
Dividend income	15 035,07	0,00
Interest income	2 017,21	3 987,75
Income in total	17 052,28	3 987,75
Expenses		
Financial/ interest expenses	-7 551,77	-8 234,31
Expenses in total	-7 551,77	-8 234,31
Investment and financial activities in total	9 500,51	-4 246,56
Surplus/ deficit	107 946,48	209 443,87
Result for the accounting period	107 946,48	209 443,87
SURPLUS/ DEFICIT FOR THE ACCOUNTING PERIOD	107 946,48	209 443,87

BALANCE SHEET 31.12.2020	2021	2020
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Tangible assets		
Machinery and equipment	3 820,51	5 094,03
Tangible assets in total	3 820,51	5 094,03
Investments		
Other shares/ holdings	789 567,38	502 975,38
Investments in total	789 567,38	502 975,38
Non-current assets in total	793 387,89	508 069,41
CURRENT ASSETS		
Long-term receivables		
Other receivables	3 393,00	3 393,00
Long-term receivables in total	3 393,00	3 393,00
Short-term receivables		
Trade receivables	28 983,39	96 630,37
Other receivables	145,55	0,00
Prepayment and accrued income	617 538,71	386 841,52
Short-term receivables in total	646 667,65	483 471,89
Cash and bank accounts	255 170,46	577 223,50
Current assets in total	905 231,11	1 064 088,39
ASSETS IN TOTAL	1 698 619,00	1 572 157,80
LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves		
Operating capital	1 467 535,17	1 258 091,30
Result for the financial year	107 946,48	209 443,87
Capital and reserves in total	1 575 481,65	1 467 535,17
Creditors		
Short-term liabilities		
Received advances	0,00	0,00
Account payables	47 201,96	40 071,51
Other creditors	21 879,59	24 166,41
Accruals and deferred income	54 055,80	40 384,71
Creditors, short-term in total	123 137,35	104 622,63
Creditors in total	123 137,35	104 622,63
LIABILITIES IN TOTAL	1 698 619,00	1 572 157,80



